



Did Jesus Go To hell?

by David J. Stewart

There has been much debate amongst scholars and preachers over the centuries as to where Jesus went after He died on the cross. His body was placed and sealed in the tomb, but where did his soul and spirit go? There are three popular theories:

1. Jesus went to hell with the damned--Acts 2:31 quotes David from Psalm 16:10 saying "He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in HELL, neither His flesh did see corruption."

2. Jesus went to paradise in Hades--I Peter 3:18 & 19 tell us "...being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by His Spirit: By which also He went and preached unto the **SPIRITS IN PRISON...**". Also Ephesians 4:9, "...He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?".

3. Jesus went to heaven--Luke 23:42, "And Jesus said unto him, *Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise*". Again in Luke 23:46 we read "And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, *Father, INTO THY HANDS I COMMEND MY SPIRIT...*".

To begin, let's look at the important word "hell". Nearly every unbeliever and false religion is quick to point out that "hell" in the Bible only refers to the grave. Though they are correct that the word "hell" most often comes from the Hebrew "Sheol" or the Greek "Hades", **they error in their assumption that "hell" refers to the grave alone.** The Old Testament Saints only knew hell as "the realm of the dead". "Sheol" did not mean a literal grave or a particular sepulcher but rather referred to the unseen world. The grave was simply a FIGURE OF DEATH. So the word was used in a broad sense. It sometimes implies the grave and yet at other times implies hell damnation. In Psalm 9:17 we read that "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God". This scripture clearly cannot refer to the grave alone because even the righteous go to the grave! Surely God is stating that judgment is awaiting those who die in their sins, never having received the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior.

"Hades" is the New Testament Greek word For "Sheol". Again, the word "Hades" has different meanings. We must let the Scripture guide our thoughts. Jesus cleared up any Old Testament misunderstandings that "hell" was ONLY a grave. In Matthew 5:22, Jesus spoke of those being in danger of "**HELL FIRE**". Jesus referred to hell as being a place of: damnation, fire, destruction, torments, weeping, wailing and nashing of teeth. A place "**Where THEIR WORM DIETH NOT, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED**" (Mark 9:44). So "Hades" was not always a mere Grave. Acts 2:31 states, "He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of

Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption." In Acts 2:31, "Hell" refers to "Hades." Hell (Greek, "Hades") is often confusing to people because it seems to only imply a place of torment and fire. However, as we learn from the true account of Luke 16, Hades had TWO compartments: Paradise and Torment. Lazarus went to the Paradise side; but, the rich man went to the Torment side. The use of the word "Hell" in Acts 2:31 refers to the Paradise side of Hades. On the cross, Jesus said to the repentant thief, "...TODAY *shalt thou be with me in paradise*". Jesus did not go to hell with the damned! He did not suffer after death, but went immediately to be "in paradise" (Luke 23:43). Jesus surrendered His Spirit to the Father, "*Father, INTO THY HANDS I COMMEND MY SPIRIT*" (Luke 23:46).

We CANNOT speculate as to whether Jesus went to suffer in Torment or remained in the grave, when we have these DIRECT statements of scripture right in front of us. On the other hand, the great evangelist, Dr. John R. Rice, believed that nothing in the bible teaches about a temporary Heaven or a temporary Hell. Dr. Rice explains that Elijah was caught up into Heaven (II Kings 2:11). "Heaven" is mentioned nearly 300 times in the Old Testament, yet nothing is even implied about a temporary paradise. So, as you can see, there is dispute concerning whether or not a place called "Paradise" existed in Hades, or not. Some theologians submit that "Paradise" simply refers to Heaven. They use the argument that 2nd Corinthians 12:4 mentions Paul being "caught UP into Paradise." However, other theologians submit that Jesus brought the souls of those who were in the Old Testament Paradise, into Heaven with Him after he rose from the dead. I am of the belief that there was an Old Testament place, in the earth, called Paradise; but it was a part of HADES. Luke 16 cannot be ignored, and supports the doctrine of Hades being compartmentalized.

Good men like Oliver B. Greene and Jack T. Chick and others do believe that Jesus went to rescue Old Testament saints from paradise; and other great men of God, like John R. Rice, believe

that Jesus went straight to Heaven. I would not be dogmatic on the issue, as it is not a fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith.

Matthew 12:40 speaks of Jesus being "three days and three night in the heart of the earth," just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly. Also in Ephesians 4:9, We are told that Jesus "descended first into the lower parts of the earth?". When Jonah was in the whale, it is likely that he died. Think about it. Could a man survive 3 days of being soaked in hydrochloric acid (strong enough to eat through steel)? Of course, God can do anything. However, in lieu of Ephesians 4:9, it is obvious to me that Jonah did die, and then descended into the Paradise side of Hades. After 3 days and nights, God brought Jonah back to life. I believe this is why Samuel was seen rising up out of the earth in 1st Samuel 28:14, he was coming from the Paradise side of Hades.

What about those "spirits in prison" that Jesus preached to according to I Peter 3:19 & 20. Simply put, the people in Noah's day were a "disobedient" people (vs. 20). Jesus through the Holy Spirit had preached through Noah unto them. The Holy Spirit is referred to in Romans 8:9 as the "Spirit of Christ." They weren't actually in prison but as the scriptures teach, their "spirits" were in prison. A prison of spiritual blindness and hardness of heart because of their own willful perverseness and sin. Such is the case with many today. God had been "longsuffering" for 120 years while Noah preached and built the ark. No one was saved other than Noah's immediate family. Will you listen to Jesus preaching?

God bless, Dave

Please read [A Biblical Examination of Hell](#), an excellent work by Dr. Max D. Younce.

